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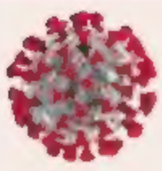


CENTRE WRITES TO SIX STATES OVER SPIKE IN COVID-19 CASES

The Centre on Thursday asked Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka to contain the recent spurt in cases

INFECTION SEEMS LOCALISED: HEALTH MINISTRY

"There are a few states which are reporting higher numbers of cases indicating possible localised spread of infection," Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a letter to the six states. Bhushan advised them to examine the situation at the micro-level and implement necessary measures for prompt and effective management of the disease

FOCUS ON TESTING, GENOME SEQUENCING

- Bhushan advised genomic sequencing for samples of international passengers and collection of samples from local clusters of cases
- He said Karnataka reported a positivity rate of 2.77%, Kerala 2.64%, Tamil Nadu 1.99%, Maharashtra 1.92%, Gujarat 1.11% and Telangana 0.31% in the week ending March 15, against the national rate of 0.61%

3,264

TOTAL NO. OF CASES IN THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 15, UP FROM 2,082 A WEEK AGO

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister

G20 | Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav | NAVA KARNATAKA FOR NAVA BHARAT

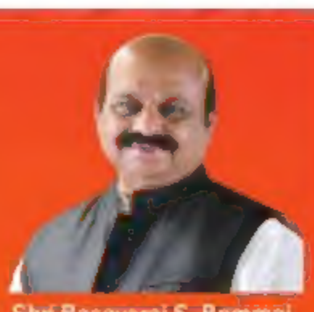
Many Steps for the Protection and Development of Kannada Language and Culture

- 'Moola Sanskruti - Kannada Sanskruti', a huge state-level festival, was organized to save and bring the unique arts of the grassroots communities to the fore.
- Karnataka Lambani Sahitya Academy has been started.
- Yaksha Rangayana has been established to preserve and develop the art of Yakshagana.

In 2023-24

- 'Janapada Habba' to be held in each district under 'Namma Jille Namma Sanskruti' Programme
- Implementation of 'Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act' to protect the interest of Kannadigas

Karnataka Information



Shri Basavaraj S. Bommai
Hon'ble Chief Minister

TEST OF DEMOCRACY, SAYS RAHUL ON RIGHT TO RESPOND

PREETHA NAIR & RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

UNDER fire for his 'democracy in danger' remarks in London, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the real question is whether he will be allowed to respond to the allegations raised against him by four BJP MPs in Parliament.

"It's my democratic right to speak in Parliament. What you are seeing is a test of democracy. If Indian democracy is functioning, I would have been able to say my piece in Parliament," he said at a press meet here after returning from London.

"After four BJP leaders made an allegation against a member of Parliament, will that member get the same space in the House or is he going to be told to shut up?" Rahul wondered.

The BJP was quick in its pushback with party leader Ravi Shankar Prasad describing Rahul as a novice in foreign policy. "Rahul should brush up his information about India's foreign policy and strategic security before passing any comment on such serious subjects," Prasad said. The BJP, he added, will continue to campaign against Rahul till he tenders his apology. The Congress, however, flatly rejected the demand.

Though Rahul attended the afternoon session of the Lok Sabha for the first time since the controversy broke out, the House was adjourned within minutes after protests. Parliament has been in turmoil over Rahul's remarks in the UK ever since the second part of the Budget session began on Monday.

"I went to Parliament this morning with the idea of putting what I feel on the floor of the House... Within one minute of my coming to the House, they adjourned it," he said.

The Wayanad MP alleged that the government is running away from questions on the relationship between the PM and industrialist Gautam Adani, who has been accused of stock manipulation and fraud by Hindenburg Research. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said all opposition parties barring a few are together and believe that what Rahul said is right.

'SPEAKER JUST SMILED'

Rahul met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla with a request to allow him to speak in the House. "He only smiled, the Speaker was non-committal," Rahul said

The wreckage of the helicopter | EXPRESS

2 dead as Army chopper crashes in Arunachal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Guwahati

TWO pilots on board Indian Army's Cheetah helicopter were killed after their copter crashed in Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday.

The helicopter was on an operational sortie from Missamari in Assam's Sonitpur district to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. However, it encountered inclement weather in West Kameng district and was returning to Missamari when the mishap occurred.

The deceased have been identified as Lt Colonel V V B Reddy and co-pilot Major Jayanth A.

Guwahati-based defence spokesman Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said that five search parties of Indian Army, SSB and ITBP were immediately pressed into service and the wreckage of the aircraft was found near Banglajaap village, east of Mandala in West Kameng district. A Court of Inquiry has also been ordered to ascertain the cause of the accident.

West Kameng Superintendent of Police B Bharat Reddy said they got information about the crash at around 12.30 pm.

Arunachal has a history of aircraft crashes. Thursday's crash is the 16th such incident since 1995. Over 100 lives have been lost in the incidents.

REIGNITING BORDER ROW

CM TO MAHA: WITHDRAW ORDER ON HEALTH SCHEME IN K'TAKA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday urged Maharashtra Government to immediately withdraw its order to implement Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MJPJAY), a health scheme, in 865 villages of Karnataka on the border.

Bommai told reporters here that he would take up the issue with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The chief minister condemned the Maharashtra cabinet's decision to provide the health insurance scheme for people of 865 villages in Karnataka and termed it an unpardonable mistake. During the recent meeting on border dispute with Shah, both states were asked to wait for the final verdict of the Supreme Court and not to take any provocative actions. But, the Maharashtra government has violated the directive, he said.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai at a conference of beneficiaries of various welfare schemes in Mangaluru on Thursday

The CM said there are many villages in Maharashtra which want to be part of Karnataka and they have even passed a resolution in their panchayats. "We could have also made such announcements. Several taluks and gram panchayats of Maharashtra have adopted unanimous resolutions seeking their merger with Karnataka as they were not getting justice in Maharashtra. Maharashtra should have behave responsibly," he said.

The Maharashtra government on Monday decided to release Rs 54 crore for implementation of MJPJAY in 865 villages and towns in Karnataka.

Congress leaders in Karnataka on Wednesday criticised Bommai as well as the Maharashtra government. State Congress president D K Shivakumar and Opposition Leader Siddaramaiah demanded that Bommai resign as CM. They also hit out at BJP MPs from Karnataka and the union government for failing to protect the state's interests.

THE STRATEGIC PASS

Border Roads Organisation personnel clear snow from the Razdan Pass in the Gurez Valley of Bandipora in Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday to reopen road connectivity along the Line of Control | PTI

Krithivasan TCS's next CEO, Gopinathan quits

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

RAJESH Gopinathan, MD and CEO of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), has resigned four years ahead of the end of his tenure. He will be replaced by another company veteran K Krithivasan. Gopinathan, who has been working with TCS for 22 years now, is leaving "to pursue his other interests". He will continue till September 15 to provide transition and support to his successor Krithivasan, who is currently the global head of TCS' BFSI vertical.

Krithivasan holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Madras and a master's degree in industrial and management engineering from IIT Kanpur.

Rajesh Gopinathan

K Krithivasan

Gopinathan had taken the reins of India's largest IT services firm from N Chandrasekaran in February 2017, when the latter took over as Tata Sons chairman. TCS shareholders had in April 2022 approved Gopinathan's appointment for five years till February 20, 2027.

This is the second major rejig in the IT sector after Infosys president Mohit Joshi quit the firm to join Tech Mahindra a few days ago.

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Six killed in Secunderabad complex blaze

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hyderabad

SIX persons, including four young women, reportedly died in the fire that broke out at Swapnalok Complex in Secunderabad on Thursday evening. The victims — identified as Shiva, Prashant, Pramila, Shravani, Vennela and Triveni — are reported to have suffocated to death after they locked themselves in a washroom to save themselves from the flames.

Officials said the fire broke out around 7.45 pm on the fifth floor of the nine-storeyed building. Five fire tenders rushed to the spot to douse the blaze. Earlier in the evening, a person, who was rescued by officials, was seen pleading with authorities to help his colleagues stuck in the washroom.

A rescue team comprising Telangana State Disaster Response and Fire Services and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation's Disaster and Response Force members evacuated eight people using a hydraulic crane elevator. Many trapped people flashed torchlights on their mobile phones to get the attention of rescue personnel.

Officials evacuated the residents of the adjacent building. Telangana Home Minister Md Mahmood Ali stated that six of the 12 people, who were rescued, were hospitalised. P5

'Twitter must give details of originators of tweets'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE union government on Thursday told the high court said that Twitter is bound to provide details of originators of tweets as per rules and it will naturally issue a takedown notice or block the account if any tweet affects the integrity and sovereignty of India or public order.

Presenting its arguments before Justice Krishna S Dixit, who was hearing the petition filed by Twitter questioning the legality of a series of 'blocking orders' issued by the union government under the Information Technology (Procedures and Safeguards for Blocking of Access to Information by Public) Rules, either to block Twitter accounts or to block the identified contents of specific accounts.

Contending that Twitter is not entitled to any relief in the case through which it has challenged the legality of a series of orders passed by the union government to block the accounts, Additional Solicitor General of India (South) R Sankaranarayanan contended that even the Supreme Court felt that it is required to find out the originators in given cases to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the country. However, Twitter is not revealing details of originators in such cases though they incite violence, saying it has to maintain confidentiality, he argued.

Stating that an intermediary, including social media, shall observe the due diligence as per Rule 3 of IT Rules 2021, he contended that Twitter is not entitled to protection under Article 19 as it is a foreign corporate and foreign entity.

Referring to Rule 4, he argued that the intermediary must provide details of the account holders when the government seeks. But, it has not responded to the notices.

The court adjourned the further hearing to April 10, 2023.

Union min injured in road accident near Vijayapura

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Vijayapura

UNION Minister of State for Consumer Affairs **Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti** suffered minor injuries when her car met with an accident on Hubballi road at Jumanal near Vijayapura on Thursday evening.

According to reports received here, Sadhvi, who attended a BJP women's convention, was proceeding to Hubballi when the accident took place.

The car in which she was travelling was hit by a mini truck. The injured driver and the minister were rushed to the district government hospital at Vijayapura. Doctors, who treated them, said both are safe. Vijayapura police have registered a case.

STUCK IN TRAFFIC?

Bike escorts to make way for ambulances

NAMRATA SINDWANI @ Bengaluru

PATIENTS needing emergency medical care may not reach the hospital in time because of Namma Bengaluru's traffic. This often leads to casualties. To help such patients, **Shree Ram Bishnoi** (27), who works as a traffic warden in the North-East Zone of Bengaluru, has launched a novel initiative of escorting ambulances to hospitals. Bishnoi, who offers his bike-escort service alone, says he is planning to set up a non-governmental organisation (NGO) soon.

"I want to create a network of volunteers to monitor traffic. They will be available on call and reach the spot and help create ways for ambulances stuck in traffic. They will escort the ambulances to hospitals," he says.

Motorists often do not make way for ambulances. They ignore the siren and keep moving ahead, causing inconvenience to ambulance drivers. The escort service will ensure adequate space for ambulances by clearing the traffic, a few ambulance crew told TNIE.

Bishnoi says he has plans to have a tie-up with super speciality government and private hospitals' ambulance services to offer his bike-escort service to them. Bishnoi, who hails from Rajasthan, came to Bengaluru seven years ago.

A similar initiative was launched in Delhi a few years ago by a group of people. This inspired him to start it in Bengaluru. Many volunteers have evinced interest in joining his NGO, he says.

3-yr-old girl's body found in Dharwad train

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Belagavi

A three-year-old girl's body was found under the seat of a passenger train which arrived here from Dharwad on Wednesday evening.

According to sources, Mysore-Dharwad Express(Train No: 07357)reached the Belagavi railway station at 1 pm. The body of the girl wearing a pink sleeveless frock was found under seat No. 20 of S3 coach by railway workers when they were cleaning it around 4 pm. The workers immediately informed their higher officials, who alerted the railway police. Police sources said that the body bore no injury marks. The body has been sent for postmortem. Further investigation is on.